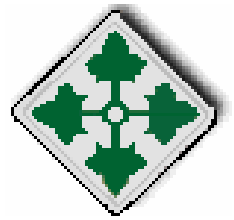




DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
Headquarters, 2nd Battalion (Mechanized), 8th Infantry
4th Infantry Division (Mechanized)
Forward Operating Base Kalsu, North Babil, Iraq



16 May 2006

To whom it concerns:

My name is SPC Verenice Flores, and I was born in San Luis Potosi, Mexico. I came to the United States when I was two years old. Since I was a teenager, I thought about joining the Army. I felt that the army was a good start to improve my career opportunities. A few years later, I graduated from high school and decided to join the army. Since then I have not looked back. The Army has definitely challenged me in many ways, physically and mentally, just as I had hoped.

I have been in the Army a little over two years now. At this point in time, I feel proud of myself. This deployment has its ups and downs, but I continue to do my job just the same. The most challenging aspect of the deployment for me is being separated from my family for a long period of time. Nevertheless, I have learned to adapt to my surroundings perfectly well. I feel that the people I work with are a second family, and I am grateful for them.

Although living in FOB Kalsu isn't perfect, it's not as bad as I had expected. I have a place to sleep, shower, eat, and practice my religion. That's all I can ask for. This place could be a lot worse so I find no reason to complain. I believe that this is better than field training; therefore, I am perfectly happy in FOB Kalsu.

Since I have been here, I have had many chances to interact with the Iraqi counterparts. Generally when I talk to them, I feel that they are on the same page with regard to our mission. They want what's best for their country. Similarly, they understand that we are here to help the Iraqi people. I also find myself having a better understanding about their culture and way of life. I am glad that I have the privilege to help bring this country back to its people, through Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Verenice Flores
SPC, U.S. Army